

**Claims after this amendment:**

1(Currently amended). A protective covering comprising:

an electrostatically charged sheet having a top and bottom surface; and

an absorbent layer having top and bottom surfaces, said bottom surface of said absorbent layer being bonded to said top surface of said electrostatically charged sheet, said absorbent layer being divided into a plurality of cells for containing liquid within the boundaries of said cells ~~spilled on said absorbent layer.~~

2(Original). The protective covering of Claim 1, wherein said absorbent layer comprises paper.

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3(Original). The protective covering of Claim 1, wherein said absorbent layer comprises an open cell foam.

4(Original). The protective covering of Claim 3, wherein said foam is electrostatically charged.

5(Original). The protective covering of Claim 1, wherein said absorbent layer comprises a fibrous mat.

6(Original). The protective covering of Claim 5, wherein said fibrous mat is electrostatically charged.

7(Original). The protective covering of Claim 1, wherein said absorbent layer comprises a plurality of hydrophobic barriers, said hydrophobic barriers defining said cells.

8(Currently Amended). The protective covering of Claim 1 further comprising a hydrophobic layer bonded to said top surface of said absorbent layer, said hydrophobic layer having a plurality of pores therethrough, said pores allowing liquid ~~spilled on said hydrophobic layer~~ to penetrate said hydrophobic layer and be absorbed by said absorbent layer.

9(Withdrawn). A method for protecting an exposed surface:

providing an electrostatically charged sheet having a top and bottom surface;

providing an absorbent layer having top and bottom surfaces, said bottom surface of said absorbent layer being in contact with said top surface of said electrostatically charged sheet; and

placing said bottom surface of said electrostatically charged sheet in contact with said exposed surface.

10(Withdrawn). The method of Claim 9, wherein said absorbent layer comprises paper.

11(Withdrawn). The method of Claim 9, wherein said absorbent layer comprises an open cell foam.

12(Withdrawn). The method of Claim 11, wherein said foam is electrostatically charged.

13(Withdrawn). The method of Claim 9, wherein said absorbent layer comprises a fibrous mat.

14(Withdrawn). The method of Claim 13, wherein said fibrous mat is electrostatically charged.

15(Withdrawn). The method of Claim 9, wherein said absorbent layer comprises a plurality of hydrophobic barriers, said hydrophobic barriers defining said cells.

16(Withdrawn). The method of Claim 9 wherein said absorbent layer further comprises a hydrophobic layer bonded to said top surface of said absorbent layer, said hydrophobic layer having a plurality of pores therethrough, said pores allowing liquid spilled on said hydrophobic layer to penetrate said hydrophobic layer and be absorbed by said absorbent layer.

17(Withdrawn). The method of Claim 9 wherein said electrostatically charged layer is bonded to said absorbent layer.

18(Withdrawn). The method of Claim 9 wherein said absorbent layer being divided into a plurality of cells for containing liquid spilled on said absorbent layer.

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19(Currently amended). A ~~composition~~ protective covering for protecting an exposed surface:

an electrostatically charged sheet having a top and bottom surface; and

an absorbent layer having top and bottom surfaces, said bottom surface of said absorbent layer being in contact with said top surface of said electrostatically charged sheet.

20(Currently amended). The ~~composition~~ protective covering of Claim 19, wherein said absorbent layer comprises paper.

21(Currently amended). The ~~composition~~ protective covering of Claim 19, wherein said absorbent layer comprises an open cell foam.

22(Currently amended). The ~~composition~~ protective covering of Claim 21, wherein said foam is electrostatically charged.

23(Currently amended). The ~~composition~~ protective covering of Claim 19, wherein said absorbent layer comprises a fibrous mat.

24(Currently amended). The ~~composition~~ protective covering of Claim 23, wherein said fibrous mat is electrostatically charged.

25(Currently amended). The ~~composition~~ protective covering of Claim 19, wherein said absorbent layer comprises a plurality of hydrophobic barriers, said hydrophobic barriers defining said cells.

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26(Currently amended). The ~~composition~~ protective covering of Claim 19 wherein said absorbent layer further comprises a hydrophobic layer bonded to said top surface of said absorbent layer, said hydrophobic layer having a plurality of pores therethrough, said pores allowing liquid ~~spilled on said hydrophobic layer~~ to penetrate said hydrophobic layer and be absorbed by said absorbent layer.

27(Currently amended). The ~~composition~~ protective covering of Claim 19 wherein said electrostatically charged layer is bonded to said absorbent layer.

28(Currently amended). The ~~composition~~ protective covering of Claim 19 wherein said absorbent layer is divided into a plurality of cells for containing liquid ~~spilled on said absorbent layer~~.

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